

Topic: Farming in early Lapoint, Utah
Transcribed by Janet Taylor, June 2001.

Greg, interviewer: My informant's name is Farrell Simmons. He is seventy-three years old. This interview is being held at Perrys'. It's March 30, 1987. My name is Greg ? and I'm a student at Lapoint Elementary. This will be a part of an oral history project.

What got you involved in farming?

Farrell Simmons (Farrell): Well, that would be hard to say, because I farmed all [my life], really, since I can remember. My dad was a farmer, your great-great grand-dad was a farmer, and so the very first thing I can remember is working on the farm. So, I can't put my finger on any one thing that would have caused me to say what was it that started me in farming. Because I like to work with the land, and watch things grow. It was one way of making a living at that time.

Greg: What was it like, farming in the olden days? Describe it.

Farrell: Well, to start out with, the land had to be cleared of brush and the way we did that, we dragged a brush-rail over the ground with a team and all farming was done with teams of horses at that time, and by hand. The land had to be worked to get it ready for the crop. There was a lot of hard work put into farming the way we used to have to farm.

Greg: How did you have to irrigate your fields?

Farrell: Well, we irrigated our fields much the same as they do now. A lot of furrow irrigation with water, but the main thing we had to do then was when there was a stream of water or a creek, we had to make a brush dam or rock dam and then plow a furrow over to the top of the field with a hand plow, pulled by horses, then shovel it out, and distribute it across the top of the land into the furrows. We had to regulate it so that the water would reach the bottom of the field about the same time. If you didn't stay there and regulate it, why, the water would get into one furrow and wash your land away down one furrow. So you had to stay with the water and keep it regulated.

Greg: Describe how long it took to plant crops.

Farrell: In those days it took quite a while, because all the ground had to be worked with a team. As a general rule, we had to plant by hand because there was no farm machinery that planted the crops. A lot of the time I would drive a team and wagon and my dad would get on the back end of the wagon with a tub full of grain, and we'd drive back and forth up and down through the field. He'd broadcast the seed with his hand, back and forth like that, and that's the way we'd broadcast and plant the grain. Then for corn, we used to plow a furrow down through the middle of the field, and plow it back and forth, and turn the water in it, and when we got the water running through, why, then we'd take our shoes off and wade up and down the furrow and plant the corn in the furrow. We did that because of the shortage of water. That way the corn would

come right up. Of course, we always leveled it off after we had got it planted, as soon as it was dry enough.

Greg: How would you feed your cattle?

Farrell: We fed the cattle much the same way as we do today. A lot of the cattle are fed out in the field, especially in the winter time. The only difference was that we had to fork off the hay, off from the haystack, because it was stacked loose. In those days we didn't have balers. The only way to feed cattle would be to fork off the loose hay onto a wagon or onto a sleigh and take it out into the field and throw it out to the cattle as we drove along. They do that to feed cattle now-days, so it hasn't changed that much.

Greg: How would you milk the cows?

Farrell: It sure is a lot different today than it was in those days. The cows – we usually drove them into a corner of the field at the time we were going to milk them and then we'd take a milk can and bucket and stool out into the middle of the field, to where we had driven the cattle, the milk cows, and they were trained so we could just sit down and sit on the stool and milk them into the bucket. A lot of times they would move and step in the bucket and would spill your milk, but usually they were trained so that you could milk them anywhere. A lot of times we would drive them into a corral and just sit down and milk them. Then we'd pour the milk through a strainer into the milk can, and that's the way we took care of the milk.

Greg: What would you do if your cows got out?

Farrell: In the early days that I remember, there were no fences, so the cows were – you might say they were out all the time. Because usually they'd go out and feed on the ditch banks, or on a grassy spot, wherever there was some grass, and they'd just be loose. Most generally cattle had to be herded and sometimes at night we'd put them in a corral. But a lot of times they were just turned loose and they just grazed around, and in the morning you'd get up and go out and round them up and drive them into a corner or into a corral and milk them. There weren't that many fences then, so they were practically turned loose most of the time.

Greg: Name some of the people you worked with.

Farrell: Well, let's see. In farming, I worked with my father and did a little work with my grandfather, which would be your great-great-grandfather. Then in the summertime we'd put up hay together with the different neighbors working together and especially on grain. When we threshed our grain, we used to work together, and I worked with your great-grandfather, that is, great-great grandfather, Harvey, and we went to the cedars and got wood to burn for the winter.

I worked with Bruce Harvey, and Blaine Morrill, and Davis Morrill, and I worked one time out at Strawberry Valley with Bill Simmons, which was my dad's brother, and we cut timber and took it up to Brigham City. We worked quite a bit with different people of the area, so we spent quite a lot of time with our neighbors, working together.

Greg: Have you ever gotten charged by a cow?

Farrell: As a rule, cows don't usually charge you unless you're trying to take a newborn calf away from them, then they kind of get upset a little bit. But I have been charged with a bull. If you went in a corral—if you had a herd of cows in there and you had a bull in there—sometimes they were kind of mean. Why, you'd better take a pitchfork with you, because they would come at you and try to boot you one. But one time I was driving the cows in and the old bull snuck up behind me and gave me a boot and about knocked me down. So, you had to be careful around bulls, but the cows, they weren't so bad.

Greg: How much money did you get for your milk?

Farrell: In the early days we didn't sell milk. The milk was put in pans and set overnight and we'd skim the top of the milk off, which was the cream, and skim it and put it in a ten-gallon can, and then at the end of the week we'd take it to the creamery. They'd test it, and they gave us about twelve to fourteen cents per pound of butterfat, for the cream. Then in later years, when they started buying milk, the milkman would come around and pick up our milk that we had put in ten-gallon milk cans, and they'd usually pay us three dollars to three-fifty per hundred-weight, according to what it tested—what butterfat test the milk produced. At that time, they would haul it for about thirty cents a hundred, so we didn't get too much for the milk. And when we separated the milk, we used to take the cream to the creamery, and then the skim milk we fed to the pigs, chickens, and the calves. So, we just sold the cream. We didn't get too much out of the milk. Is that all of it?

Greg: Yes.

END OF TAPE.